

Children's Department.

THE RESULT OF A KIND ACT.

Oh Harry, I wish I had an orange. Two little feverish hands were clasped together, and a wan, flushed face looked up from the pillow with a piteous appeal in the child's blue eyes.

"Dear Nellie, I'd do anything to get you one," said the little boy, coming over to the side of the bed and dropping his head on the pillow beside Nellie's.

"Don't you suppose you could somehow," asked the thin, parched lips. "Isn't there a single penny left in the drawer?"

"No, not one. Father took the last this morning. You remember he came in after mother'd gone to Mrs. Benson's to do the washing."

"Yes," said Nellie wearily, "and Mrs. Benson's got an uncommon big washing to do to-day, and mother won't be back until most night and maybe I won't want any orange then, but I do now so much—Oh, so much."

"I might go down into the street and see if I couldn't earn a nickle in some way, only——"

"Only what," asked Nellie eagerly as Harry paused.

"I promised mother I'd stay with you until she come back. She's so worried about you and she don't want you left alone."

"But I wouldn't mind being left alone, I'd be thinking about the orange all the time, and I know that mother'll be glad you went. My mouth is so hot and dry, and the water isn't one bit good."

"Oh, I do wish that father wouldn't drink up all the pennies," sighed Harry.

"So do I. But Harry dear, won't you go, please?"

"Yes, Nellie." Harry bent over and kissed the hot face of his little sister, and then he turned quickly away.

The hot August sun beat down upon him as he passed along, and he thought of that close room where Nellie lay waiting for her orange. Yes, he must take her one, somehow. Harry had large blue eyes and a look of suffering rarely seen on the face of one so young. Glancing from the child's pale face to his slender form, you discover that he is slightly deformed, that his back is not right, and had you taken the trouble to inquire at any of the houses, you would have been informed that the curse of his misfortune lay at a drunken father's door; that once Joe Lea, with infuriated rage, had struck the helpless child a cruel blow while the little one was half way up a ladder, and losing his balance he had fallen to the ground. His

spine was injured, the doctor said, and he would never wholly outgrow the effects of that blow and fall.

Any one in the village could have told you this story, because it was not a large place and everybody knew Harry's sad story.

Sick little Nellie must have an orange; but how should he get it for her. He thought he would ask the widow Hopkins to let him split wood for her; but as he passed her yard he saw an older and stronger boy doing the work, and remembering his weakness and helplessness, he sighed and passed on.

A little further on, he saw Mr. Simpson, the butcher, bargaining with a drover for the purchase of an ox, which overcome with fatigue and heat, had dropped down at the roadside near the butcher shop. At first Harry thought he would ask the kind-hearted butcher for a few pennies to buy Nellie an orange, but at that moment, happening to glance across the street, he saw his father coming from the saloon, wiping his mouth and reeling along in an unsteady manner. A crimson flush spread over the boy's face and he shrank back behind some bushes. Father had spent the pennies for drink that mother had left for Nellie's orange. Harry's sensitive nature would not allow him to ask Mr. Simpson for money now. Mr. Simpson had seen his father, he felt sure of it. No, he couldn't ask him, he must think of something else.

"Poor thing," thought Harry, as his eyes fell upon the ox which lay by the road side with its red tongue lolling out, "looks so warm and thirsty, I'll get it a drink."

Taking his cap from his head, he filled it with water and held it under the tired beast's nose. A moment later and the ox had accepted of the cool drink, which the kind heart of the little boy had tempted him to offer.

"Well now," said Mr. Simpson, "that was real kind. How did you happen to think of it, lad?"

"I don't believe in paying boys for doing acts of kindness; but a little encouraging don't hurt 'em any," said the drover as he slipped a nickle in Harry's hand.

"Oh thank you, sir," he cried with animation. "Nellie shall have her orange now."

"Did Nellie want an orange?" asked the butcher, kindly.

"Yes sir, she's so sick and feverish," said Harry, earnestly, "and she's been wanting an orange all day. I came out to get one for her. I didn't know how I could, because I had no money, but I thought that maybe God would help me, and He did."

"Yes," said Mr. Simpson, "because He gave you the good little heart that prompted you to do an act of kindness to a poor beast. Just step into the 'grocery' with me and I'll see that you get a nice large orange."

The "grocery" was next door to the "meat market." Mr. Simpson told Harry to wait for him at the door while he went and spoke to Mr. Hughs. A few moments later he came up to Harry with a small basket in his hand.

"There," said he, "are four nice oranges, three lemons and two bunches of grapes. Go home and help Nellie eat them. And Mr. Hughs says that he'd like to engage a nice thoughtful boy to do some light chores about the grocery for him. Eh, Mr. Hughs?"

"Yes," said Mr. Hughs, "and I'd pay such a boy a dollar a week at first, and more if he proved handy and learned the business readily."

"But you don't think I'd do, Mr. Hughs, do you?" asked Harry breathlessly.

"Yes I think you'd do nicely, when could you come?"

"Monday, if Nellie gets well so that she can go with mother, and I guess she will after seeing these."

His eyes rested lovingly on the basket as he spoke.

"Well, don't leave Nellie if she needs you; I'll keep the place for you," said Mr. Hughs as Harry turned joyfully homeward.

I wish I could say, right here, that Harry's father became a temperance man; but alas! if the misfortune he had caused to his own child had no power to reform him, there was little hope for him. His heart, mind and intellect had become so saturated with liquor that he had no thoughts for anything beside how to obtain drink. This course was a short one, however, and a few years later he died a drunkard's death, and his family were relieved from his presence which had proved more of a curse than a blessing.

After Joe Lea's death, the people of the village united in assisting the destitute family, and soon the widow and her children were in far better circumstances than they could ever have hoped for had Mr. Lea lived, and still continued his downward course, which in all probability he would have done.

HUMILITY is the first lesson we learn from reflection, and self-distrust the first proof we give of having obtained a knowledge of ourselves.—*Zimmerman*.

"THE path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."